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Follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action

Written statement* submitted by Organisation Internationale pour les pays les moins avancés (OIPMA), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[24 May 2018]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Challenges of the LDCs

The International Organization for the Least Developed Countries - Organisation internationale pour les pays les moins avancés (OIPMA) welcomes the progress made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals in the Least Developed Countries as reported in the UNCTAD LDCs 2017 Statistical Tables and the UNCTAD Least Developed Countries 2017 Report.

Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are low-income developing countries with the lowest indicators of socioeconomic and human development. They are highly vulnerable to economic and environmental hazards and have low levels of material and human assets. There are currently 47 countries on the list of the LDCs which benefit from exclusive access to international support measures for development assistance.

It is increasingly recognized that human rights are essential to achieve sustainable development. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) covered certain economic and social rights but ignored other important human rights issues. By contrast, human rights principles and standards are now strongly reflected in an ambitious new global development framework, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In September 2015, 170 world leaders gathered at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York to adopt the 2030 Agenda. The new Agenda covers a broad set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 167 targets and will serve as the overall framework to guide global and national development action for the next 15 years.

The SDGs are the result of the most consultative and inclusive process in the history of the United Nations. Grounded in international human rights law, the agenda offers critical opportunities to further advance the realization of human rights for all people everywhere, without discrimination. The SDGs apply to the LDCs, just as the MDGs did although with a broader transformative, comprehensive and inclusive orientation.

The new Agenda offers a paradigm shift from the traditional model of development. It provides a transformative vision for people and planet-centered, human rights-based, and gender-sensitive sustainable development that goes beyond the vision of the MDGs.

It promises "more peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence" with attention to democratic governance, rule of law, access to justice and personal security, as well as an enabling international environment It therefore covers issues related to all human rights, including economic, civil, cultural, political, social rights and the right to development

Finally, it strives to leave no-one behind, envisaging "a world of universal respect for equality and non-discrimination" between and within countries, including gender equality, by reaffirming the responsibilities of all States to "respect, protect and promote human rights, without distinction of any kind as to race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national and social origin, property, birth, disability or other status."

Therefore, the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals could provide a real opportunity for radical transformation in the Least Developed Countries far beyond the opportunities and achievements of the former Millennium Development Goals, in particular regarding the protection and promotion of human rights in those countries.

OIPMA recommends that the implementation of the SDGs follows four fundamental principles:

1. Respect previous international commitments on development in particular in the field of human rights. The SDGs should not lower the level of ambition set by previous international commitments. Where similar issues are addressed, SDG goals and targets should be in line with or more ambitious than, those in these earlier agreements including:

    i. the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): The SDGs must complete the unfinished visions and ambitions of the MDGs and improve them substantially bringing them to a new level;
    ii. the Rio Principles and Rio+20 commitments: The SDGs should reflect the Rio Principles, in

particular Principle 6 ("The special situation and needs of developing countries, particularly the least developed and those most environmentally vulnerable, shall be given special priority.");

iii. the Istanbul Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries: The IPoA, whose overarching goal is "to overcome the structural challenges faced by the least developed countries in order to eradicate poverty, achieve internationally agreed development goals and enable graduation from the least developed country category" through "sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth", has proven to be a robust roadmap for development that has been strongly embraced by LDC governments;

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2. Leave no one behind The SDGs should ensure that no country and no people are left behind. Equity is fundamental to sustainable development. Achieving equity will require special attention to those that have been left behind in past development efforts. For LDCs, that special attention should take the form of differential and preferential treatment for LDCs (DPTL): differential in respect of obligations and preferential in respect of international support. As the MDGs experience has demonstrated, the LDCs will not benefit equally from the SDGs, let alone catch up to other developing countries, without DPTL. Within a framework of universal goals the SDGs must therefore include some targets specific to LDCs in order to direct resources towards LDCs, level the playing field and make rapid progress possible.

3. Support technical cooperation, capacity-building and structural transformation of LDCs by UN bodies and agencies. In accordance with the goals and objectives of the IPoA, the focus of development efforts in LDCs over the period of the SDGs should be on building capacity to create decent poverty-eradicating employment, fund social services and provide sustainable dynamics for growth. It is important to integrate socioeconomic development with progress in the field of human rights. Therefore, UN technical cooperation and state capacity-building assistance must be oriented to the promotion and protection of all human rights in the LDCs as it is the only way to progress towards more prosperous, equitable and peaceful societies.

4. Create a coherent framework for LDCs to pursue sustainable development The SDGs need to avoid the temptation to replicate the compartmentalized approach of the MDGs; achieving sustainable development requires integrating all the dimensions of development. The SDGs framework does not need to reproduce what already exists nationally but should help countries identify and fill critical policy gaps. The SDGs need to be forward looking, supporting countries to identify the opportunities and prepare for the challenges of the future. The framework must include provision for countries to define their own targets and indicators guided by and employing the structure provided by the SDGs. Finally, the SDGs must clearly spell out how the SDGs will be implemented through strong attention to the Means of Implementation for each goal and for the overall set of goals.

OIPMA fully support the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals in the LDCs and call the international community to give the priority the implementation of the SDGs in the LDCs for achieving prosperous, sustainable, equitable and peaceful societies with human rights for all.